DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 396 489 EC 304 869

AUTHOR Obiakor, Festus E.; And Others
TITLE Demands and Challenges of Being an Educator with a Disability.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 32p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adaptive Behavior (of Disabled); Adjustment (to Environment); Advocacy; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Influence; Federal Legislation; Higher Education; Inclusive Schools; Interviews; Professional Occupations; Self Determination; Self Efficacy; Social Integration; Success; *Teacher Role; *Teachers with Disabilities

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses demands and challenges of being an educator with a disability and includes a review of the literature and an analysis of an interview with a leading educator with a disability. The paper opens with a discussion of the definitional issues and implications of the terms "handicap" and "disability." Literature on the role of the educator in today's society is reviewed, followed by a review of the challenges of being an educator with a disability. These challenges are organized around responses of a successful educator, Wendell J. Lewis, Section Administrator for the Disability Determination Services for the State of Kansas and an African-American with muscular dystrophy, to questions concerning the following themes: (1) family support; (2) least restrictive environment, integration, and inclusion; (3) lifespan challenges; (4) self-efficacy; and (5) federal legislation and advocacy. Ways to provide needed special resources or to restructure education positions are suggested. (Contains 35 references.) (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 396 489

Demands and Challenges of Being an Educator with a Disability

Festus E. Obiakor, Ph.D.
Sharon Karr, Ph.D.
Emporia State University

Bob Algozzine, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina-Charlotte

Cheryl Utley, Ph.D.
Juniper Garden's Children Project
University of Kansas

EC 304869

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Festus Obiakor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Demands and Challenges of Being an Educator with a Disability

Festus E. Obiakor, Sharon Karr, Bob Algozzine, and Cheryl Utley

> History is not kind to idlers. The time is long past when America's destiny was assumed simply by an abundance of natural resources and inexhaustible human enthusiasm, and by our relative isolation from the malignant problems of older civilizations. The world is indeed one global village. We live among determined, well-educated and strongly motivated competitors. We compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops. America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p.6)

This clarion bell on educational reform by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) was heard far and wide. Many other reform-related reports were initiated. About a decade later, the U.S. Department of Education (1992) instituted the "America 2000" program to ambitiously make the "Nation at Risk" a "Nation of Students." The major thrusts of this program included (a) parental choice, (b) national testing, and (c) accountability at all levels. On March 31, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act "to reform our schools dramatically by establishing high academic and occupational standards and providing support to states and communities to help students reach those standards" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p.1). As the U.S. Department of Education pointed out:

> American education is in crisis. Our schools are not meeting the needs of students or the demands of our economy for a more skilled, more adaptable work force. And many vocational education and job training programs don't equip beginning or experienced workers with the skills needed for success in the workplace. Without comprehensive education reform across America, our nation's economic strength is in jeopardy. (p. 1)

Apparently, for the past two decades, general and special educators and other service providers have been bombarded with programmatic challenges to enhance individual and collective growth. Coupled with these governmental efforts are other legislative efforts to maximize the potential of all persons inspite of strengths, weaknesses and exceptionalities. For instance, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112) addressed accessibility and employability issues of individuals with disabilities (Linthicum, Cole, & D'Alonzo, 1992). The 1975 Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) provided the total mobilization stage for positive actions toward persons with exceptionalities. This legislation was later reauthorized in 1990 as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101-476) to continuously provide (a) free and appropriate public education, (b) nondiscriminatory identification and assessment, (c) procedural safeguards, (d) placement in the least restrictive environment, (e) confidentiality of information, (f) individualized education programs, and (g) evaluation of programs (Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1993, 1994; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow, 1992). To challenge the private sector, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (PL 101-336) signed by President George Bush was promulgated to reiterate basic thrusts of accessibility and employability for persons with disabilities. These laws have pertinent implications for general and special educators from pre-school through university

levels. The critical question is, How prepared are these educators to address accommodation, accessibility and employability issues as we advance into the 21st century? In this article, we discuss demands and challenges of being an educator with a disability in this changing time. To buttress our ideas, we interviewed a leading educator with a disability to elucidate trials and tribulations faced by such educators.

The Dilemma: Handicapism Versus Disability

One dilemma that confronts educators is how to respond to definitional issues in special education. While definitions do not totally determine policies, some definitions are deficit-oriented. Some create labels and stereotypes, and lead to mythical retrogressive thinking and illusionary conclusions. According to Kuehn (1995), "a substantial roadblock to a rational disability policy lies in the fact that disability has different meanings depending upon the eligibility requirements or purposes of a program" (p. 172). He added that "equating the term `disability' with `handicap' leads to other problems. Someone who looks and acts disabled is not necessarily unable to work. But many people identify someone in a wheelchair, for example, as handicapped regardless of disabilities" (p. 173). Put another way, an individual can have impairments or disabilities and yet may not be handicapped. Insensitive individuals and unaccommodating environments can be handicapping to persons with disabilities. Kuehn noted that "disabling environments require correction at the community level, yet our disability policy frequently focuses on the individual's limitations rather than on the environmental (attitudinal as well as architectural) barriers created by society" (pp. 173-174).

The promulgation of PL 101-476 makes the term "handicap" a taboo that should be avoided, if at all possible. This becomes a dilemma in this age of political correctness (PC)

debates. Looking at individuals with disabilities from a developmental perspective challenges the deficit-oriented mind-set in recruitment, accommodation, and employment (Linthicum, Cole, & Alonzo, 1992). It shifts paradigms and powers in professional settings and creates individual and group opportunities for professional growth. Persons with disabilities are capable, but opportunities for growth must be provided. These opportunities must entail:

1. Recruiting and promoting individuals with disabilities.
2. Providing right equipments as needed.
3. Making accommodations accessible.
4. Preparing nondisabled colleagues to work with their disabled peers.
5. Involving persons with disabilities in functional goal-directed decision-making.
6. Capitalizing on real experiences rather than on perceptions.
7. Connecting individuals with their communities through job opportunities.

Characteristics of An Educator

Our world is changing; and as educators, we are startled and intrigued by this changing world. This change represents socio-economic, political, and cultural advancements. In the United States, education and democracy are linked together. It is difficult to divorce one from the other. Thus, when things go wrong in the society, educators are most often scrutinized (Van Dalen & Brittell, 1959). The intriguing question is, How can educators progressively respond to change while tactically preserving their entrenched culture? Laws have been promulgated, and reform programs have been instituted even though reform debates continue to rage. Deal and Peterson (1991) wrote:

Individually and in the aggregate, the ideas and assumptions behind the various reforms

> make sense. Problems arise, though, when we try to introduce changes, or any new idea, into an existing organization. Bureaucratically implementing a reform policy can become a superficial exercise in compliance that never disturbs the underlying operations of schools. (p. 6)

A logical extension of Deal and Peterson's (1991) statement is that "change" is difficult to implement in any organizational structure (e.g., colleges and universities). Based on this presumption, "change" requires a new kind of educator who understands and values the invisible underlying behaviors of an organization and is still willing to disrupt his/her equilibrium. In other words, this novel educator must be willing to leave his/her comfort zone and search for "new" meaning. For general and special educators to survive in today's changing world, they must possess some "business beatitudes" (Beattie, 1982). These business beatitudes must include character, enthusiasm, courage, responsibility, persistence, endurance, self-control, integrity, confidence, knowledge, determination, ambition, team-work, and wisdom. These beatitudes must be incorporated into teacher preparation programs to achieve desired outcomes. Goodlad and Lovitt (1993) and Obiakor (1994) decried the lack of moral imperatives in general and special education programs. They noted that the government's intrusion in educational affairs might be due to educators' inability to do the right things. Obiakor and Ford (1995), in the same dimension, decried the "soullessness" of teacher preparation programs and the "poverty of the teaching spirit." They argued that all persons inspite of their exceptionalities and/or cultural backgrounds must be at decision-making avenues. This is a far cry from what Ryan and Cooper (1988) observed a few years ago when they wrote:

> Although there is a good deal of talk about teachers' authority and

> decision-making power, both exist at a very low-level. Teachers are at the second rung from the bottom (superior only to students) of the hierarchy commanded by the board of education. They teach who they are told, and when they are told. If their supervisors do not like the results, teachers are only rarely protected by their professional group from being fired (or more gently, "not rehired") by the local school board. Most of the important decisions that affect teachers' daily lives, even those that bear directly on the standards of their own profession, are made by nonteachers. (p. 482)

Professors on college and university campuses are not immune from the lack of control of professional destiny. It is no wonder that most legislative efforts and reform programs that we thought were visionary have produced illusionary results. As Ryan and Cooper (1988) pointed out, "teachers must take on a larger role in the governing of their career affairs" (p. 484). Taking on this larger role might possibly be more visibly productive in the commitment of educators to their professional organizations (Obiakor, 1989). In its policy on "inclusion" the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (1993) stated that inclusion must go beyond the classroom and inclusive classrooms must lead to inclusive teacher preparation programs and communities. Such an inclusive policy must be multicultural, collaborative, consultative, and cooperative. In terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act, inclusion entails wholehearted recruitment, involvement, accommodation, employment, and empowerment of professors and students with disabilities. It also means that intra-individual and inter-individual differences

brought by persons to schools and workplaces will be respected and valued. Educators must enhance successful exchanges based on values attached to the appreciation of the following tasks (George, 1995):

1. Examination of the classroom culture.
2. Effective classroom instruction planning.
3. Manageable teaching roles negotiation.
4. Learning environments' restructuring.
5. Effective cross-cultural settings' lecturing.
6. Supportive work setting building.
7. Beyond the classroom work consideration.
8. Implementation of effective instructional strategies.
9. Structuring language supports for teaching.
10. Enhancement of learning with technologies.
11. Student performance evaluation.

Challenges of Being an Educator with a Disability

As noted earlier on, given the high expectations for education and the complexity of today's society, all educators face complex demands and challenges. About half a centuryago, teachers identified top problems caused by their students as talking without permission, chewing gum, making noise, running in halls, cutting in line, failure to follow the dress code, and littering. By 1990, the most serious problems in American public schools were alcohol and drug abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault. Today, many students face severe poverty, broken homes, child abuse, and various forms of escapism, including abuse of alcohol and drugs,

television, and suicide (Ryan & Cooper, 1988). In addition to working with many troubled children and youth, educators must also actively deal with a group of problems in which the school is an intimately entangled participant (Ryan & Cooper, 1988). Many of these tension points are a result of an attempt to educate children in a pluralistic society. Access to equal educational opportunity has been denied to some segments of our society because of disability, socio-economic status and culture (Ryan & Cooper, 1988).

As mentioned earlier in this article, schools are under great pressure to increase student performance and to be accountable. These social problems and tension points in public education create special demands and challenges to today's educators. For instance, Marge West, a member of the 1995 class of inductees to the National Teachers Hall of Fame, summarized these demands and challenges when she remarked, "Teaching is an exhausting, painful, demanding, stressful, difficult, exciting, exhilarating, enjoyable, rewarding labor of love which requires the virtues of kindness, loving service, diplomacy, fairness, patience, stamina, dignity, compassion, encouragement, and praise" (Emporia Gazette, 1995, p. E4). West, a first grade teacher, believes three Rs (Responsibility, Respect, and Restraint) must be added to basic skills in today's school programs. West's comments are particularly meaningful for these challenging times because she is visually impaired. According to the Emporia Gazette, "In 1987 Marge West became the first blind teacher in Colorado to be allowed to continue to teach in the regular classroom with a guide dog, `Rush,' and full-time aide" (p. E4). The educator with a disability has additional demands and challenges to meet. West noted, "I use my disability as a positive teaching tool, displaying that it is not circumstances but attitudes that make us happy" (Emporia Gazette, 1995, p. E4).

To gain a better understanding of an individual's personal perspective of his/her disability, experiences in preparing for practicing profession, and level of disability activism, we interviewed Mr. Wendell J. Lewis, Section Administrator for the Disability Determination Services for the State of Kansas (see Table 1 for questions). Mr. Lewis is an African-American professional who has excelled in his chosen profession. So, not only does Mr. Lewis have to combat the issue of disability, he also has to combat the issue of race. Johnson and Farrell (1995), Obiakor (1994), and West (1993) concurred that race has continued to matter in the United States. Problems confronted by African-Americans and other minorities in special education have been well-documented in the literature (see Ford & Obiakor, 1995; Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Ford, 1992, 1993). A profile of Mr. Lewis' accomplishments in the field of special education (or in specific terms, developmental disabilities) is presented in Table 2. Mr. Lewis responded to a series of five questions that described significant people that influenced his personal life and career, challenging events that shaped his personal philosophy about special education and life, professional skills that fostered his success in the workplace, and recommendations for the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. These responses are represented in the following subheadings--they accentuate the central themes of this article.

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Family Support

Family values and variations in lifestyles serve as sources of strength for persons in

coping with a disability, professional ambition and standing notwithstanding (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Mr. Lewis' experiences regarding family support highlights experiences of most African American families. Apparently, African-American families with a member with a disability have high expectations and aspirations, inspite of their child's disability. They tend to have strong kin networks in which extended family members (e.g., grandmother) provide emotional support for a child with a disability (Harry, 1992; Utley, 1984). Below, this point is illustrated uniquely in Mr. Lewis' early life:

> My grandmother, who was a dedicated teacher in a one-room school house, inspired me to become a teacher and pursue the field of teaching. She recognized in me the desire to learn and I became an avid reader. While growing up, books had a special meaning in my life. I would read anything that I could get my hands on! In the 1950's, I read Black history books and the accomplishments of African-American educators in society. Because of their positive impact on my life, I chose the field of education as the profession where I could make a significant contribution to society.

A closer look at the values and customs of other cultures reveals many strengths--such as supportive extended family networks--that make African-American families with a member with a disability more resilient than Caucasian families with a member with a disability. The roles of parents of children with a disability are numerous, ranging from advocates, learners, interventionists, and decision-makers (Gartner, Lipsky, & Turnbull, 1991). Consider this description of Mr. Lewis's parents in his own words:

> My parents provided the same opportunities for me as other normal-achieving

children in school, even though it was suggested to them that I should attend a foundation for crippled children. I recall that my parents were very supportive of everything I wanted to do. For example, I was the scorekeeper for baseball games and I was the equipments' manager for the football team.

Positive events in Mr. Lewis' life are directly related to his parents' involvement and the decisions they made concerning their son's schooling. Epstein (1989) outlined several types of parenting practices in relation to student and teacher outcomes. For example, parents who are effective communicators interact with administrators and teachers and monitor their child's progress. Student outcomes include parent participation in conferences and making better decisions about school programs. One important teacher outcome is knowledge that the family has common base of information for discussing student individual needs. The partnership between parents and teachers also helps children with disabilities to acquire skills and attitudes, which guide them to their chosen profession. Mr. Lewis recollected the impact of his teachers in the following experience:

> Teachers have had a profound and positive impact on my life. They, too, realized my desire to learn and gave me books to read. On books, the autobiography of Helen Keller, was my first exposure to someone with a disability who accomplished many things in her life. I learned that someone with a disability can accomplish anything that he/she wanted to do, especially if they put their minds into it. Later on in life, I learned not to view my disability or events in my life as being negative. The fact that I am an African-American with a disability has shaped me to become the person that I am.

Least Restrictive Environment, Integration, and Inclusion

The placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and/or integration of students with disabilities is a very complex and demanding process. Inspite of the barriers often encountered in the integration of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, there is an abundant amount of literature discussing the importance of restructuring of the current special education system and the merger of regular and special education systems. One innovative model, the comprehensive local school (Sailor, Anderson, Halvorsen, Doering, Filler, and Goetz, 1989) was designed to foster children's capabilities across a variety of integrated settings and to enhance the quality of life for children with severe disabilities. Therefore, three significant components of integration process should include (a) age-appropriate curriculum/placement, (b) proximity to regular education students, and (c) the need for interactions with the general population of students. Integrated educational programs have programmatic significance for the nature of persons with disabilities. Mr. Lewis shared below his early schooling experiences which involved overcoming barriers and being integrated in regular education classes:

> As an African-American, racial prejudice existed when I first started school. In 1953, I was bussed to an all Black school because my parents felt that I would receive a better education with normal-achieving students. While in junior high school, I was mainstreamed into regular education classes before mainstreaming became an idea. The school building was not accessible and had three floors. The principal was a very insightful man and doing something very difficult that had not been tried before. I just felt that the best thing for me was to be in that

> school. The principal of the junior high school insisted that I continue my education with those same students because I had been going to school with other children for several years. Even though I could walk with crutches and navigate a flight of stairs very easily, the principal made arrangements for other students to carry me up the stairs on a daily basis. In those days, principals were not worried about being sued by parents because of accidents.

How to support all persons with and without disabilities in fully inclusive classrooms, schools, and universities have become the central focus of the efforts of regular and special education teachers. According to Stainback and Stainback (1990), an inclusive school is defined as "a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met" (p. 3). These authors identified strategies essential to the implementation of inclusive schooling, some of which include (a) establishing a school philosophy, (b) accepting students with disabilities as a natural part of the neighborhood, (c) establishing a task force of administrators, teachers, school personnel, and parents, and (d) establishing networks of support among peers, professional and non-professional staff members. Following are Mr. Lewis' comments on the current state of affairs in special education:

> One's philosophy of education is extremely important and teachers must believe that students with disabilities should be a part of the mainstream rather than receive services outside of the mainstream. Special education teachers should be looking to do away with what they do. They should be in all classrooms and not just in special education classrooms. Every teacher/service provider should be a

special educator, not just an educator. Children with disabilities can be mainstreamed when supports are there in the regular classroom. For example, there is a school that I visited in Boulder, Colorado where teachers and administrators practiced full inclusion in a neighborhood school. There were two special education departments, but there were no special education classes. All of the students were mainstreamed. The special education teachers worked with students in the regular education classrooms. This system of inclusion works because all necessary components were in operation. All the administrators, principals, teachers, students and parents believed in the concept of "full inclusion." Typical peers can see that children with disabilities have similar feelings, desires, and emotions just like everyone else. Peers, as teachers and mentors, can help children with disabilities to correct problems--they are quick to recognize when someone is putting them on. We must educate the general public about what inclusion does for everyone. Everyone benefits from it.

Mr. Lewis' statement has far-reaching implications for professionals with disabilities. It is extremely important that these individuals are supported with accessible buildings, rewarding employment opportunities and choices, and successful role models who have excelled in their chosen professions. Professionals with disabilities on college and university campuses have to be understood, accepted, and valued. When they are included in the educational mainstream, everyone gains.

Lifespan Challenges

Only recently has federal legislation and policy implementation begun to clearly require

the serious implementation of the American Disabilities Act of 1990 on college and university campuses (Duston & Provan, 1995). This disability law has required institutions to complete a self-evaluation of all of their educational programs and services to insure that people with disabilities could participate fully. Despite the risks involved in not complying with the law (e.g., lawsuits), few universities have met deadlines for the completion of documents and plans showing compliance.

One of the obstacles that Mr. Lewis faced in college was he had to make a decision about what to do with his life. The critical question for him in the 1960s was, "Where do I go to school in my wheelchair?" As he pursued his college education, he found three college campuses in the United States that were accessible to persons with disabilities in wheelchairs. Fortunately for him, Emporia State University (formerly Kansas State Teacher's College), located in Emporia, Kansas, accepted persons with disabilities in their secondary education program. In pursuing his college education, however, there were several obstacles that made college life very challenging (e.g., it was rare to see a college professor who was African American and disabled).

Labels serve as sources of perceptions for the person being labeled, which in turn serve as the foundation for altered expectancies and performance. Two perspectives have been advanced in the study of labeling children and adults with disabilities. The first perspective looks at the impact of labels on perceptions and behaviors of persons being labeled (Ysseldyke, et al, 1992). In interviewing Mr. Lewis, he discussed below the first perspective:

> More often than not, individuals with disabilities are labeled and stereotyped by individuals without disabilities. The majority of non-disabled people view

> persons with disabilities as needing help, they cannot do anything for themselves, and they cannot accomplish much. Most people who don't have disabilities believe that people with disabilities should be shut away, kept someplace away from the mainstream, and taken care of. People try to decide what's best for people with disabilities and not let them decide what's best for them.

The second perspective examines the impact of labels on perceptions and behaviors of those who interact with persons being labeled (Ysseldyke, et al, 1992). In Mr. Lewis' account of his college years, he responded to this perspective using the following scenarios:

> Upon entering college, my advisor stated that I should major in business and accounting because students with disabilities could do the work and that was the traditional cause of study for students with disabilities. Persons with disabilities were not expected to major in the field of education. The second biggest obstacle in college was the disability itself. When I went to college, the counselors in Vocational Rehabilitation Services evaluated me for financial support and they turned me down for services because my disability was too severe. They told me that I would never work and it was not practical for them to pay for my education. My parents financed my education and I did clerical work in the Alumni office to earn money.
>
> My third biggest obstacle was that I was an African-American with a disability. Individuals with disabilities who are African-Americans face "double prejudice." During this time of my life, African-Americans tended to accept persons with disabilities a lot easier than White Americans. They [African-

> Americans] are faced with the awesome task of learning to adapt to White structure and to the world without disabilities. I received advice from several people suggesting that I should not be active because of my disability. For example, some people told me that I should spend my time by staying in the dorm and watching television. On the other hand, I received advice from an African-American, who was a paraplegic in a wheelchair. He pulled me aside and told me to get out of the dorm and not to sit around and watch television with everyone else. He said, "take your wheelchair to where people are doing things. If you face stairs, there will always be someone there who will help you to get up those stairs." He was right!

Self-Efficacy

To determine an appropriate, individualized, educational program for persons with disabilities, it is important to understand their feelings and beliefs about themselves. Some traditional educators have posited that many persons with disabilities have negative views of themselves, the world, and the future--not only do these individuals feel inadequate, they also blame themselves for their inadequacies and failures. For instance, Hare and Hare (1977) noted that self-concept in the visually impaired may be negatively affected because they cannot experience a situation fully or learn about an object in its entirety. What these educators have failed to address is the negative impact of the environment on these persons with disabilities. A more educationally-relevant conceptualization of self-concept of persons with disabilities is that self-concept is multidimensional and situation-specific. It changes as contexts change (Obiakor & Algozzine, 1994; Obiakor, Stile, & Muller, 1993). This conceptualization has several

educational implications. First, self-concept or self-efficacy is not genetic. The environment plays a great role in molding a particular aspect of self-concept. Second, self-concept can be described, explained, measured or quantified--it is not determined by suppositions of what we think is "right" or "wrong." The fact remains that what is "right" or "wrong" is dependent on what a group of people or community assumes it to be. Third, self-concept can be accurate or inaccurate depending on who is judging it. A logical extension is that college and university campuses can improve self-efficacy of individuals with disabilities when they do the following (Obiakor, 1994):

1. Learn to identify characteristics that help individuals understand who they are, what they value, and how to set and reach for realistic goals.
2. Create campus environments where persons with disabilities feel accepted.
3. Find and develop what is intrinsically motivating to individuals with disabilities.
4. Emphasize that failure is not the end of the road, but a part of learning.
5. Inspire persons with disabilities to learn to control their lives.

Apparently, throughout the interview, Mr. Lewis talked about self-determination, self-empowerment, self-understanding, and self-love as a foundation for accomplishing goals in life. He pointed out that:

> One must be determined and believe that he/she can succeed in life. One has to believe that his/her abilities are as good as anyone else. Once one acquires reading skills, he/she can accomplish anything. I have always been able to meet people who have wanted to help me to overcome barriers, no matter what they were.

Federal Legislation and Advocacy

Gerry and McWhorter (1991) discussed major problems that undermine the effectiveness of federal legislation to prevent unlawful employment discrimination against persons with disabilities. Legislation to prevent unlawful employment practices must include a general federal statutory ban against such discrimination, comparable in scope to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1972 (which bans employment discrimination against persons on the basis of race, national origin, sex, and religion by all employers of 15 or more persons). In addition, Gerry and McWhorter suggested that "active reinforcement of two current statutory provisions (Section 503 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), which ban employment discrimination against persons with disabilities by federal contractors and grantees, should have a positive impact in preventing the unnecessary unemployment of persons with disabilities" (p. 518). In other words, colleges and universities should be advocates and teach individuals to learn productive advocacy techniques. In expressing the importance of advocacy for persons with disabilities in the community and workplace, Mr. Lewis stated as follows:

> As an advocate, it is important to communicate the needs of persons with disabilities who cannot communicate and advocate for themselves. Educators need to understand that the decision-making about persons with disabilities needs to rest with those persons with disabilities. Employers are not aware of what persons with disabilities can do--they must believe in them and be willing to take a chance. If persons with disabilities have good thinking skills and punctual on the job, they can learn to compensate for their differences or limitations. As Chairperson of the Kansas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, the

organization that represents persons with severe mental retardation and those who are also physically challenged, I have expressed the philosophy that individuals with disabilities want to function outside of an institution and in the community. I have spoken before the state legislature and spoken with national leaders and asked them to make changes in the laws and regulations on how people are treated and perceived by persons with disabilities in communities and workplaces.

Moving Beyond Tradition

All systems in the United States are currently undergoing tremendous changes. The family system, the educational system, the political system, and the economic system are among the many systems making unprecedented changes. Federal laws have been passed to maximize the potential of all Americans. These laws have impacted both the public and private sectors, specifically in the education and employment of individuals with disabilities. As part of the inclusion movement, regular and special educators in many primary and secondary schools are educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Although progressing slowly, colleges and universities have started to provide people with disabilities full access to educational programs and services. The Americans with Disabilities Act has also impacted all phases of private and public sector employment, business and commercial accessibility, and the use of public and private transportation services and telecommunication services (Duston & Provan, 1995). Consequently, individuals with disabilities will be participating, benefitting, and contributing with other Americans on a daily basis to an extent unimagined during previous times (Linthicum, et al, 1992).

Hence, more individuals with disabilities must be (and will be) employed as educators.

Like all teachers, they must fill multiple roles (e.g., scholars, instructional specialists, psychologists, scientists, practitioners, and career educators) (Banks & Thompson, 1995). Today's educators must meet the needs of children and youth who are under stress, as well as the needs and demands of parents and the community. To achieve professional success, the individual with a disability must first meet the requirements of all successful teachers. However, to be successful many educators with disabilities will require special resources. Local school boards and administrators must demonstrate creative problem solving in making reasonable accommodations for the educator with a disability. Existing school facilities must be made readily accessible. This may require installation of a ramp for a new educator. A classroom on an upper floor may need to be moved to ground floor. Special equipment may need to be purchased. For educators who have visual impairments, equipment modification may include adaptive hardware and software for computers, electronic visual aids, braille devices, talking calculators, magnifiers, audio recording and brailled material. Educators with hearing impairments may need telephone handset amplifiers or telephones compatible with hearing aids. For the educator with limited physical dexterity, equipment modifications such as gooseneck telephone headsets, mechanical page turners, and raised or lowered furniture may be needed (Linthicum, et al, 1992). A teacher's aide or teaching/graduate assistant may be needed for a teacher who has a visual impairment.

Another reasonable accommodation is the restructuring of an education position. For example, instead of providing a teacher's aide or teaching/graduate assistant for a teacher with a visual impairment, a principal, chairperson, or Dean may combine classes so the teacher with the impairment could team-teach with another teacher. In certain situations, volunteers, including

students, could assist the educator who has a disability. In addition to having reasonable accommodations, the educator with a disability needs support from the school administration, nondisabled colleagues, parents, and students.

Educators with disabilities have the opportunity to provide role models for students who have disabilities. They also expose nondisabled children to adults who are making contributions to society, in spite of their disabilities. According to Mr. Tim Hughes, the father of one of Marge West's first graders, "My son marveled that the woman who taught him all week would come to his soccer game on Saturday . . . He learned what sight has to do with the heart as well as the optic nerve. I'm grateful for Marge's heart-vision that has always shown through her near-sightless eyes" (Emporia Gazette, 1995, p. E4). Hopefully, a new era in our society has arrived and the American people will acknowledge that "educators' greatness lies, not in grand educational innovations, but in the daily giving of themselves" (Emporia Gazette, 1995, p. E4).

Conclusion

The society has so much to gain from involving all individuals in its day-to-day functioning. We must make efforts to accept, appreciate and value the roles of professionals with disabilities. The laws are already promulgated; but the fruits of these laws cannot be maximized unless colleges/universities, general and special educators, and communities work together as partners. Frantic efforts must be undertaken to enhance collaboration, consultation, and cooperation at all levels. As we move into the 21st century, we must be innovative in our problem-solving techniques. There is no "one-size-fits-all" technique to including and involving individuals with disabilities in the educational process. We cannot deny our problems, and we cannot deny our efforts. We must be realistic. As Duston and Provan (1995) concluded,

colleges and universities can maximize the potential of individuals with disabilities when they:

1. Go back and self-evaluate their programs at all echelons.
2. Immediately review their transition plans, if any exist.
3. Use review results to modify programs.
4. Keep campus and local groups representing people with disabilities aware or what they are doing, and keep them involved in setting priorities.
5. Insure that procedures for people to request accommodations and file for grievances are under the ADA guidelines.

References

Banks, S.R., & Thompson, C.L. (1995). Educational psychology for teachers in training. Minneapolis, MN: West.

Beattie, W.R. (1982). A treasury of business beatitudes. New York: Doubleday.

Council for Exceptional Children. (1993). CEC policy on inclusive schools and community settings. Reston, VA: Author.

Deal, T.E., & Peterson, K.D. (1991). The principal's role in shaping school culture. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Duston, R.L., & Provan, R. (1995), The perils of ignoring the disabilities act. Chronicle of Higher Education, pp. B1-2.

Emporia Gazette. (1995, June 17-18). Head of the class, pp. E1 & E4.

Epstein, J. (1989). On parents and schools: A conversation with Joyce Epstein. Educational Leadership, 47, 26.

Ford, B.A., & Obiakor, F.E. (1995, February). What's next for African-American exceptional learners? CEC Today, 1, 12.

Ford, B.A., Obiakor, F.E., & Patton, J.M. (1995). Effective education of African American exceptional learners: New perspectives. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Gartner, A., Lipsky, D.K., & Turnbull, A.P. (1991). Supporting families with a child with a disability: An international outlook. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

George, P.C. (1995). College teaching abroad: A handbook of strategies for successful cross-cultural exchanges. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Gerry, M.H., & McWhorter, C.M. (1991). A comprehensive analysis of federal statutes and programs with persons with severe disabilities. In L.H. Meyer, C.A. Peck, & L. Brown (Eds.), Critical issues in the lives of people with severe disabilities (pp. 495-525). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Goodlad, J.I., & Lovitt, T.C. (1993). Integrating general and special education. New York: Merrill.

Hare, B., & Hare, J. (1977). Teaching young children: A guide to preschool and the primary grades. New York: Grunne & Stratton.

Harry, B. (1992). Cultural diversity, families, and special education. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kuehn, M.D. (1995). An agenda for professional practice in the 1990's. In D.R. Atkinson & G. Hackett (Eds.), Counseling diverse populations (pp. 167-186). Madison, WI: WCB Brown and Benchmark.

Linthicum, E., Cole, J.T., & D'Alonzo, B.J. (1992). ADA handbook: A guide to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Obiakor, F.E. (1989, March). Enhancing the teaching profession through professional organizations. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Association of Educators (MAE), Jackson, MS.

Obiakor, F.E. (1994). The eight-step multicultural approach: Learning and teaching with a smile. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Obiakor, F.E., & Algozzine, B. (1994, Fall). Self-concept of young children with special needs: Perspectives for school and clinic. Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 10, 123-130.

Obiakor, F.E., Algozzine, B., & Ford, B.A. (1993, October). Urban education, the General Education Initiative and service delivery to African-American students. Urban Education, 28, 313-327.

Obiakor, F.E., Algozzine, B., & Ford, B.A. (1994). Education reform and service delivery to African-American students. In S.B. Garcia (Ed)., Addressing cultural and linguistic diversity in special education: Issues and trends (pp. 1-9). Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Obiakor, F.E., & Ford, B.A. (1995, April). Restructuring and reforming: "Rat race" for excellence or failure? Paper presented at the 73rd Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Indianapolis, IN.

Obiakor, F.E., Patton, J.M., & Ford, B.A. (Eds.) (1992, October/November). Special Issue: Issues in the education of African-American Youth in special education settings. Exceptional Children, 59, 97-176.

Obiakor, F.E., Stile, S.W., & Muller, D. (1993). Self-concept in school programs: Conceptual and research foundations. In F.E. Obiakor & S.W. Stile (Eds.), Self-concept of exceptional learners: Current perspectives for educators (pp. 1-18). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Ryan, K., & Cooper, J.M. (1988). Those who can, teach (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sailor, W., Anderson, J.L., Halvorsen, A.T., Doering, K., Filler, J., & Goetz, L. (1989). The comprehensive local school: Regular education for all students with disabilities. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Stainback, W., & Stainback, S. (1990). Support networks for inclusive schooling: Interdependent integrated education. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Turnbull, A.P., & Turnbull, H.R. (1990). Families, professionals, and exceptionality: A special partnership. New York: MacMillan.

U.S. Department of Education (1992). America 2000: An education strategy. Washington, D.C.: Author.

U.S. Department of Education (1994). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Utley, C.A., & Marion, R. (1984). Working with black families having mentally retarded members. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association on Mental Deficiency, Minneapolis, MN.

Van Dalen, D.B., & Brittell, R.W. (1959). Looking ahead to teaching. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Ysseldyke, J.E., Algozzine, B., & Thurlow, M.L. (1992). Critical issues in special education (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Table 1 Interview Questions

1. What positive and negative events in your education have helped you to become an outstanding educator with a disability in your career?
2. What obstacles have you had to challenge to become successful in your field of endeavor?
3. What personal goals and skills are needed to be successful in the workplace?
4. What are the challenges faced by special educators?
5. What are your recommendations for helping special educators to address accommodation, accessibility, and employability issues in the workplace?

Table 2 Profile: Wendell J. Lewis

Race:	African-American
Sex:	Male
Age:	Forty-six
Marital Status:	Divorced
Type of Disability:	Muscular Dystrophy
Occupation:	Section Administrator for the Disability Determination Referral and Services
Agency:	State of Kansas, Topeka, Kansas
Responsibilities:	Supervisor, Examiners for Social Security and Disability Claims
Education:	Post-graduate study in Higher Education at Kansas State University M.S. degree in Counselor Education from Emporia State University B.S. degree, Major: Secondary Education, Emporia State University
Accomplishments:	1993-present, Member, Mountain Plains Regional Advisory Board 1990-present, Chairperson, Kansas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities 1979-1980, Member, Shawnee County Affirmative Action Advisory Board

1978-1979, Member, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Board

1977-1978, Delegate, White House Conference on the Handicapped

1973-1974, Special Education Teacher, Fullerton Union High School District and Santa Ana Unified School District in California